

The
George Washington University
Library



**DOES NOT
CIRCULATE**

George Washington University,
Washington, D.C.

The George Washington University Bulletin
1832

SPEC
LD
1907
.A12
V.12
1832

COLUMBIAN COLLEGE—DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 422.]

FEBRUARY 27, 1832.

Mr. THOMAS, of Maryland, from the Committee for the District of Columbia, to which had been referred the memorial of the Trustees of Columbian College, made the following

REPORT:

The Committee on the District of Columbia, to whom was referred the memorial of the Trustees of Columbian College, signed by Stephen Chapin, President of the College, and I. L. Skinner, President of the Board of Trustees thereof, have had the same under consideration, and beg leave to report: .

That, in the year 1821, a charter was granted to the trustees of Columbian College, constituting them a body corporate, for the purposes therein named. In pursuance of said charter, the college was immediately organized, and went into successful operation. The buildings which were erected, were soon filled with students from various parts of the Union; and the institution continued for several years in a flourishing condition, enjoying prospects of public utility, equal to any college of its age in the Union.

In 1826, about five years from its foundation, the pecuniary affairs of the college had become greatly embarrassed, by reason of the improvidence, or mismanagement of its officers, and their agents. On a close examination of its concerns, it was found, that the college had incurred debts to the amount of one hundred thousand dollars, in the purchase of lands, buildings, and other improvements, bank stock, a library, and philosophical apparatus; and, in addition to that sum, about thirty-five thousand dollars, which, as far as can be now accurately ascertained, consisted of the following items, viz: current expenses of the college beyond its income, pecuniary losses, unfortunate contracts, and forced means to raise money, from time to time, making the whole debt amount to the sum of one hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars. For further detail, reference may be had to papers accompanying a report to the House of Representatives, made March 12, 1830.

Under the forementioned circumstances, the election of a new board of trustees took place; which event was followed by the appointment of new and trusty agents. The attention of the board was, forthwith, directed to the reduction of the debt, as a primary object, in which they have been signally successful. By the sale of their bank stock, a compromise with their creditors, and a rescinding, by Congress, of their Government contracts, and

by very liberal subscriptions by the friends of the college, the trustees have already paid one hundred and ten thousand dollars of their debts; and have an additional subscription, nearly filled, sufficient to pay the remaining twenty-five thousand dollars.

In the meantime, the college, which was suspended in its operations a short time, on account of its embarrassments, gradually revived, and has been carried on for several years past, on a plan of such rigid economy, that it has sustained itself, under the management of the present faculty, from the income received for tuition alone, without diminishing the means provided for the payment of its debts.

The memorial, after reciting the foregoing facts, prays Congress to grant a donation to the college, to be derived from the sale of public lots in the city of Washington, or from such other source as Congress may think proper to direct.

Your committee think the request of the memorialists is reasonable, and ought to be granted.

Few institutions present as strong claims to the patronage of Government, as that, in behalf of which the forementioned memorial has been presented. Its location near the seat of Government, its salubrious middle climate, and other advantages, and the commendable efforts of its present trustees and professors to sustain it, justly entitle it to public beneficence. It is confidently believed, that the grant by Congress, of the sum now prayed for, will be followed by liberal donations from other friends of the college, so as to enable the trustees to employ one or two more professors, who are necessary to complete the organization of a valuable institution, and essential to secure its permanent prosperity, and expanding usefulness.

Your committee having decided on the justice and expediency of making the donation asked for, deem it right and proper, to indicate the source from whence the required funds ought to be derived. We are unwilling to recommend a direct appropriation from the National Treasury. Such a measure would, necessarily, involve principles calculated to array against it many enlightened and liberal members of Congress, who, we doubt not, would gladly lend their aid to meliorate the condition of their fellow citizens, whenever it can be done consistently with their views of constitutional power. It is, therefore, thought most advisable, to recommend that a grant be made to the trustees of Columbian College, of public lots in the city of Washington, of the value of _____ thousand dollars, to be selected and valued by the Commissioner of the Public Buildings, and sold under the direction of the trustees.

The committee do not design to grant, (nor have the memorialists desired,) a power to the trustees, to expend any part of this donation in payment of the debts of the college; neither is it thought desirable that the principal should be used to compensate the professors. For those purposes, the interest only, on the sum proposed to be granted, added to expected donations from public spirited individuals, and the amount annually received for tuition, will, it is hoped, prove amply sufficient. It therefore becomes the duty of the committee, to point out the disposition, which, in their opinion, ought to be made of the fund derived from the sale of the public lots.

Instances are almost innumerable, wherein funds, placed under the entire control of individuals for public purposes, have been lost by improvident investment, or imprudent loans to private persons. In the integrity and discretion of the present trustees of Columbian College, implicit confidence can

be placed. The character of their successors, cannot, however, be foreseen. The pecuniary affairs of that institution, have been, heretofore, much mismanaged by unskilful or unworthy agents. Like causes may produce a similar condition of things hereafter. To guard against this possible frustration of a benevolent design, the committee respectfully recommend, that Congress direct the investment of the donation to be given in some profitable and imperishable fund; and have, in the bill herewith reported, required the said trustees to subscribe to the full amount of the money received by them, from the sale of the said public lots, for stock in the company incorporated by the Legislature of Maryland, at November session, eighteen hundred and twelve, to make a turnpike road from the line of the District of Columbia, where it crosses the post road leading from Georgetown to Fredericktown, through Montgomery and Frederick counties, to Fredericktown. The supreme legislative power of the United States over persons and property within the District of Columbia, is unquestioned. Congress has repeatedly made grants of portions of the public lands to seminaries of learning situated within the limits of States and Territories, where such lands lie. The constitution having thus confided to the care of the National Legislature, the rights and interests of the people of the District of Columbia, and Congress having made liberal donations out of the national domain to promote the great cause of education in all the other districts within which the General Government has exclusive jurisdiction, it would seem to be cruel injustice to refuse the small boon now recommended. These considerations, induce the hope that the proposed donation will be exempt from all opposition, not founded in doubts of the just claim to patronage of the institution for the benefit of which it is designed. And those claims, it is fully believed, will stand the test of the severest scrutiny.

